

# A Pin for a Clew

By an Ex-Operative of the Secret Service

## Capt. Dickson Illustrates a Detective's "Nose for Details."

**W**HAT do I consider the most important thing to notice when first investigating a crime?

Capt. Dickson, a retired secret service officer, had repeated the words of my question.

After some moments of thought, he replied:

"Well, from my own experience, it has become a fixed conviction with me that no crime is ever committed where the criminal fails to leave behind some clew that, if it is only found and its worth appreciated, will invariably lead to the detection of the culprit."

"I have a case in mind, a post-office robbery. It happened when I was connected with that department, before I was transferred to the broader field of the secret service. I will never forget the village where it occurred. It was a town of some 300 or 400 souls in the Green mountains. It had only one hotel, and in the three weeks that I was detained there, I almost destroyed my digestion endeavoring to support life on its abominable fare. I believe that I felt a keener satisfaction in the royal meal I secured at Boston, on my return to Washington, than I did in capturing the author of the robbery."

"The post-office safe had been tapped for a large quantity of stamps, about \$500 in money and a brand new money-order book. This last item gave importance to the case, because a book of money-order blanks in the hands of a clever crook can cause the government more trouble than a session of congress."

"The safe was a crude iron affair which was fastened by means of a clumsy brass key. The key was too large and too heavy to be lugged about, and after the safe was locked it was hid away in a corner of the cash-drawer. A peculiar circumstance of the robbery was that the safe had been found locked and the key was in its place of concealment. The culprit had possessed an intimate knowledge of the habits of the postmaster and his assistant, Miss Lundy, a young lady of fine appearance and charming personality."

"Mason, the postmaster, had a theory that two tramps had committed the theft. He said that two suspicious characters had come into the office the afternoon before the robbery and had bought five two-cent stamps. He considered this a suspicious circumstance, as he said that persons of their type always bought stamped envelopes—no more than they needed at the time—and that they always mailed their letters before leaving the office, addressing them with the dilapidated pen maintained by the postmaster at all country offices for victims who have no alternative than to use it. At the back of the building, a window-glass had been broken out, and Mason especially directed my attention to it, as he said it must have been by this means that the robbers gained entrance to the building. All of the doors had been securely locked."

"I made a minute examination of the premises, and the only thing I found was a small steel pin with a green-glass head. It was in a crack of the floor immediately in front of the rifled safe. Without attracting attention, I secured the pin and stuck it beneath the lapel of my coat. I thought it might prove of value. It did. It was the key to the situation."

"My examination showed that the robbers had entered the post-office through the front door, and that the broken window was merely a blind or else it had been broken by accident. I didn't take much stock in this last theory, but put the window down as a deliberate effort to muddy the water. There were two doors, a front and a back one. The rear one was kept locked and the key to it hung on a nail in the office. Only Mason and Miss Lundy had keys to the front door."

"It was not so easy to trace Mason and the young lady on that evening. After some considerable work I learned that neither of them had been at home the early part of that particular evening. No one knew where they had been nor what they had done during this period. Mason had left his home and Miss Lundy her boarding house early after supper on that night on the pretext of taking a walk. Mason had returned sometime after midnight. The hour of Miss Lundy's return was uncertain."

"Already sorely puzzled over the evidence which was accumulating, one morning, upon arising, I was more than ever mystified by finding a slip of paper under the door of my room. In a sprawling, unnatural hand, four words were written upon it."

"Mason robbed the safe."

"When I visited the postoffice, I noticed that Mason was pale and haggard and he was as nervous as a caged leopard."

"When I went to the hotel at noon, I found a tiny note on the table in my room. It was a dainty, perfumed bit of paper, just the kind that refined young ladies employ in their polite correspondence. I jumped to the conclusion that it must be a further mes-

sage of the same character as the morning's note. It was, but there was a decided conflict in the news it contained. In a cramped, disguised writing, evidently a woman's, were five words:

"Miss Lundy is the robber."

"Frankly, I didn't know what to think. Suspicion and these mysterious notes pointed to the postmaster and his handsome assistant. The letters were written by different persons, and it was easy to imagine that Mason and the young lady had robbed the safe and that each of them had been seen by a different person as they left the building; that these per-

sons were a woman and a man and that they had taken the pains to advise me of what they had seen by means of the brief, unsigned notes."

"The situation puzzled me more than ever and I didn't fall asleep until late that night, having tossed away many restless hours upon the instrument of torture which did service for a bed in the stuffy room of the hotel. Involuntarily, next morning, I as soon as my eyes opened. It was there, a third note, on the same paper, in the same hand and of the same purport as that of the morning before. The only change was in the wording of it."

"Why don't you arrest Mason? He robbed the postoffice. Ask him if he didn't break the window-glass. He won't deny it."

"I worried through the morning somehow, never trusting myself to show up at the post-office. At noon I was forced to go back to the hotel, as it was the only place of public entertainment in the village. I headed straight for my room, expecting to find a fourth note on the table. I was not disappointed, for there it was, as big as life, the exact counterpart of the day before:

"Miss Lundy is the robber."

about the very language of his incoherent confession and his manner in making it that told me that Mason was not the thief."

"What more do you want?" Mason breathed. "I did it, I tell you, and I shall be convicted of it. I can't restore the stamps and the money-order book because I have destroyed them, but here is the money, every penny of it."

"He threw a roll of bills in my lap and continued:

"My confession is sufficient to convict upon. I will repeat it in court and I want you to arrest me and get me away from here just as soon as you can."

"Just at this juncture the depot-agent entered the office with a telegram for me. It was a cipher message from the department. Taking out my code book, I translated it in a moment and the contents of it, in the light of Mason's confession, was nothing less than unnerving."

"Without a word I wrote the message out and passed it over to Mason: Money orders being passed Waco and other Texas towns."

"What does it mean?" he cried.

"Before I could answer him, Miss Lundy came into the office. With a

"After some time they called to me. Between the two of them they explained everything. They had long been lovers and, with the aversion that lovers have for the clattering of village gossip's merciless tongues, they had succeeded in keeping their attachment a secret. They had been engaged for some time, and it was their custom to meet at the home of a kindly old widow lady of an evening, she alone knowing of their engagement. On the night of the robbery they had spent the evening together at the widow's."

"She and Mason had left the widow's about ten o'clock and Mason had left her at the gate. After leaving her, Mason had taken a long stroll and, about midnight, had passed the post-office in returning to his home. As he approached the building he had seen a lady leaving it, closing and locking the door after her."

"Next morning, when he opened the safe he discovered the robbery. His suspicion of Miss Lundy had then come upon him."

"It was a pretty tangle. The lovers had straightened it out to their own satisfaction and, while I knew that neither of them had any guilty knowledge of the deed, I was far from being



"SHE DIDN'T DO IT, CAPTAIN DICKSON—I ALONE AM GUILTY."

satisfied and felt that my work had just begun."

"With my suspicion of Mason set at rest, I could confide more fully in him, so I set out with two clues, the woman visitor that Mason had seen and the pin with the glass head. There were many women in the village that fitted the description in a general way and that was a hard clew to follow, so I fell back upon the pin. There were none of the kind for sale in the village nor had there ever been, so I knew that the pin must be an imported one. This was some progress, but I was still far from shore."

"I don't know that I would ever have run the thief to earth if it hadn't chanced that I met a lady one afternoon who wore a flower pinned upon her breast. A glance showed me that the pin which held it was the twin brother to the one I had found. The lady, I learned, had been in the village some four or five months, teaching a dancing school with great success. No one knew where she came from."

"It was an easy matter to clear up the robbery after this. She was an old timer in criminal deeds and as slick a crook as ever wore petticoats. She had easily learned the careless methods of the post-office and, when she deemed the occasion ripe, had selected a skeleton key from her stock and pulled off the robbery, a neat job except for Mason's untimely appearance upon the scene. She had most of the stamps in her possession, but she had sent the money-order book to her husband, who was then operating in the profitable field of the south-west."

"How about the lovers, did you say? They were married in due time and I had the pleasure of officiating as best man."

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Some tropical daisies measure a foot in circumference.

# COOPERS GUILTY

Jury Returns Verdict of Second Degree Murder.

SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN PEN

Ex-Sheriff John Sharp, Charged With Being an Accessory, Acquitted—Jury Had Been Out Since Wednesday Morning.

Nashville, Tenn., March 20.—Col. Duncan B. Cooper and his son, Attorney Robin Cooper, charged with the murder of ex-Senator E. W. Carmack, in the streets of Nashville, were found guilty of murder in the second degree Saturday morning by the jury, which had been out since Wednesday morning.

After the jury pronounced the verdict, Judge Hart sentenced the Coopers to 20 years each in the state penitentiary.

The same jury Friday morning declared that ex-Sheriff John Sharp, who was charged with being an accessory to the murder, was not guilty, and he was ordered released.

At that time the jurors declared they were hopelessly divided as to the guilt or innocence of the Coopers and that they could not reach a verdict.

Judge Hart, however, ordered them to return to the jury room and take up the case again. The result was that Saturday morning the Coopers were found guilty of murder in the second degree.

The Coopers, father and son, killed ex-Senator Edward Ward Carmack, on the streets of Nashville, because of editorial attacks that had been made upon them in Carmack's paper, the Nashville Tennessean. They declared in their defense that they acted in self-defense, but the jurors thought otherwise.

**WATER TANKS BURST.**

Two Persons Killed and Many Injured—Property Loss Over \$200,000.

Parkersburg, W. Va., March 20.—With a roar resounding for miles around the two water tanks of 1,000,000 gallons capacity each, which supplied this city with water, burst Friday morning and the water, rushing in great torrents in all directions, caused death, destruction and ruin.

The great volume of water swept down the hill, carrying with it houses and all of their contents. It was an irresistible, overwhelming force, carrying with it everything in its path. Houses were swept away as if made of straw, and in many instances dwellings, with their occupants yet sleeping in their beds, were thrust from their foundations, hurled into the streets and twisted and torn as if by a tornado. Two persons were killed and many injured. The property loss will amount to between \$200,000 and \$250,000.

**PLAN TO INSURE PEACE.**

South American Presidents Would Avoid Intervention by United States.

Washington, March 20.—Suggestions of a conference of Central American presidents with the idea of removing all possible causes for intervention by the United States and Mexico, contained in dispatches from the City of Mexico, was the subject of gossip at the state department Friday.

It is known that the suggestion came from one of the Central American republics and that it would meet with the approval of both the United States and Mexico.

Information received here makes it plain that while no actual hostilities have broken out in Central America there continues a disquieting alertness and fear of outbreak among the countries there which the United States and Mexico are agreed should be removed.

At the same time they are ready to act promptly in the situation if necessary demands.

**Couple Found Dead.**

Oil City, Pa., March 20.—The bodies of Mr. and Mrs. Warren Briggs, with bullet holes in their breasts, were found at their home, 10 miles east of Tionesta, Forest county, Friday. The body of Amos Walton, a neighbor, was found in the house with his head almost blown off. It is believed that Walton killed Briggs and his wife and then committed suicide.

**Blaze on Pier.**

New York, March 20.—Fire which started late Friday at the land end of an 800-foot Lehigh Valley freight pier in Jersey City, destroyed the pier, storehouses and sheds and nearly \$100,000 worth of merchandise before it was flooded out by the combined forces of the Hoboken and Jersey City fire departments and a large fleet of tugs and fireboats. Loss \$200,000.

**Poorhouse Burned.**

Gardiner, Me., March 20.—With flames roaring against the rear wall of the building, 18 bedridden inmates of the city almshouse were carried to places of safety by the attendants Friday and half an hour later the building was in ashes.

**Family Poisoned.**

Memphis, Tenn., March 20.—Councilman A. H. Frank and his entire family were seriously poisoned by eating shrimp, it is thought. Mrs. Frank is still ill, but the others are almost well.



KILLING THE SALOON.

A Most Striking Record of Temperance Progress.

An interesting review of the progress of temperance reform throughout the United States in the past year has recently been furnished the temperance press of that country by Rev. Charles Steitz, a prominent leader in social work among the industrial classes.

"The saloon," he states, "is disappearing at the rate of 30 a day! This means a frontage of about 50 miles for the recent year. Eight thousand members left the Bartenders' union during the year, mostly because the bars over which they dispensed liquors are closed."

"In ten months' time five entire states banished their saloons. Three had already done so, with the result that about one-sixth of the states are now 'dry.'"

"On January 1, 1909, there went into effect prohibitory legislation covering an area, together with that already in force in this district, of a solid block 320 miles north and south by 720 miles east and west, so that one may travel from the Mississippi to the Atlantic ocean, and from the boundary of Tennessee to the Gulf of Mexico, without seeing a legalized saloon. Great Britain and Ireland could be set down over this space with 10,000 square miles of 'dry' territory left as a border. Whereas a decade ago 6,000,000 persons in this country lived in 'no license' territory, now 38,000,000 live in 'no saloon' districts."

"The saloon has been abolished by law in two-thirds of all the territory of the United States. One interesting thing about this entire movement is that the states which are most enthusiastically in favor of the abolition of the saloon are those which for many years sustained a reputation for the manufacture and the consumption of whisky and other intoxicating liquors—Kentucky, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Texas, Mississippi, the Carolinas, and the Virginias, are the most temperate states in the union, while Oklahoma comes into the union with the determination that she would bring no saloons with her."

"Georgia was the first southern state to adopt prohibition. Then followed the action of Oklahoma, and Alabama almost immediately fell into line. Next came Mississippi, and the 96 counties in Tennessee are now 'dry.' Kentucky has an investment in distilleries of \$160,000,000. But through local option legislation it has expelled the saloon from 96 of its 115 counties, from 370 towns of the 425 towns and cities, and from 97 per cent. of the territory of the state. In a few years Virginia abolished 1,000 saloons, or one-half of those in the state. Two-thirds of all the saloons now open in Virginia are found in three cities, and one-half of all the 'wet' territory is confined to Norfolk and its vicinity. Of the 1,000,000 people living in West Virginia 700,000 have abolished the liquor traffic. The remainder of the southern states have the local option law in operation in large areas."

"Kansas has long been a prohibition state. North Dakota is also a 'dry' state, while Maine is the mother of prohibition. In Ohio about 68 per cent. of the territory is now 'dry.'"

**TEMPERANCE NEEDED.**

Alcohol the Enemy of National Efficiency.

In her author's introduction to her latest work, designed of temperance import, Marie Corelli, the noted English novelist, sets forth in no uncertain way her attitude on the alcoholic question and aptly expresses the need for national uplift along the line of temperance. "As for the drink 'evil,'" she states, "I wish every one to whose hands this book may fall would honestly try to realize the widespread misery, disease, pauperism, crime and lunacy for which that hideous evil is responsible, and would add his or her wish and will to mine in a strong prayer that the wicked financial profit derived by a few out of the physical and moral debasement of the many may be checked and finally come to naught; so that the British people, released at last from the dominant away of the liquor traffic may rise to the best of everything in them—the best of brain, the best of health, the best of life. A temperate people must always be a strong people; and, to hold our own in the days that are coming, we shall need all the strength that sound minds and sound bodies can give us. There is no room in the future of Britain for a national vice which betrays a national weakness."

**Georgia Bars Whisky Ads.**

The Georgia Anti-Saloon League announces that the league will prosecute newspapers of the state for printing whisky advertisements on the ground that these papers are hired agents and solicitors for whisky houses in violation of the state prohibition law.

When we are made a witness of the power of evil, then it is time to set about measuring our own strength.—Royston.

Much of our discontent in life is due less to any lack of our own lot than to the seeming over-abundance in that of our neighbor.—Clume.